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ABSTRACT

This newsletter theme issue includes five articles on migrant education and migrant students. "Creative Educational Opportunities for Migrant Students" (Abelardo Villarreal, Anita Tijerina Revilla) discusses the need to increase high school graduation rates among migrant students, the high dropout rate and low standardized test scores of Texas migrant students, technical assistance available to migrant educators from the comprehensive regional assistance centers, and strategies to remove barriers to graduation for migrant high school students. A table lists second-language acquisition strategies and activities for students at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of English language learning. "Schools As Communities of Learners: An Initiative toward Creating Democratic Education" (Anita Tijerina Revilla) describes an initiative to improve schools along the U.S.-Mexican border by creating learning communities and partnerships that include students, parents, teachers, and local businesses. In "A Call from Beyond," LeRoy Johnson reflects on his youth as a migrant worker and the day he found out he was going to college. "Migrant Students and the Influence of Teachers" (Frank Gonzales) describes a library program of Spanish-language preliteracy activities developed by four teachers in an Arkansas school district. "1997 Exemplary Migrant Students" profiles two Texas migrant students honored for their academic successes in a booklet of 37 such profiles. A list of educational web sites dealing with migrant education is included. (SV)

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INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

IDRA Newsletter

IDRA Focus: Migrant Education

ISSN 1069-5672 Volume XXV, No. 2 February 1998

ED 417 919

Creative Educational Opportunities for Migrant Students

Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D. and Anita Tijerina Revilla, M.A.

Inside this Issue:

Second language acquisition strategies

◇ *Migrant families new to the school*

◇ *Profile of exemplary migrant students*

◇ *New resource guide for schools*

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Migrant students are perhaps the most educationally disenfranchised group of students in our schooling system. They are highly mobile and have diverse linguistic backgrounds, which pose challenges that our educational system is minimally prepared to address.

Schools must adapt the delivery of educational services to ensure that migrant students meet graduation requirements. This adaptation must not compromise the quality of education migrant students receive, and it must not limit opportunities for migrant students to continue their education beyond high school.

Many migrant students who graduate from high school do so through a General Education Development (GED) program. While a GED is often thought to be equivalent to a high school diploma, many college admission committees and employers consider it meaningless. Educators are responsible for ensuring that more migrant students meet graduation requirements and are awarded a diploma. Furthermore, for limited-English-proficient (LEP) migrant students, instruction in English must reflect the adequate use of English as a second language (ESL) techniques.

Migrant students' families seek economic survival in unskilled laboring, and they are forced to accept employment that requires constant travel and unsteady living conditions. A child should not suffer educationally because of the economic situation of his or her family. In fact, national leaders affirmed this in the objectives of Goals 2000 by charging the nation to strive for higher educational standards for *all* students, including migrant students. High standards are essential elements of quality education that are not offered to many migrant students, and such standards are necessary for high academic performance to occur schoolwide.

Texas has the second largest migrant student population in the nation with 115,000 migrant students. A large percentage of these students' families are agricultural workers. According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) migrant education office, 98 percent of all migrant students are Hispanic, and between 30 percent and 40 percent are LEP.

The condition of education for migrant students in Texas is dismal. They are a subgroup of the LEP student population that performs considerably below the state average in the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test. The table on Page 2 provides a comparison of the academic performance of student groups and the state average.

While TEA reports that the dropout rate of migrant students in Texas in the 1995-96 school year was only 2.2 percent for students from seventh to 12th grade, this figure is misleading. It is an annual percentage, not a longitudinal percentage, which means that it only measures whether or not a student completes one academic year instead of measuring how many students continue school into the next grade. It does not account for the hundreds of migrant students who leave school before reaching the seventh grade. Furthermore, this figure does not differentiate between students who receive a high school diploma and those who receive a GED.

TEA is currently conducting a study

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The Intercultural Development Research Association *(IDRA)* is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity. The *IDRA Newsletter* (ISSN 1069-5672, copyright ©1998) serves as a vehicle for communication with educators, school board members, decision-makers, parents, and the general public concerning the educational needs of all children in Texas and across the United States.

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to determine the number of times migrant students are retained in one or more grades compared to other students. There are definite indications that the retention rate is much higher among migrant students.

States with migrant student populations receive federal funds to comply with the Improving America's Schools Act. Title I of the act requires schools to supplement state and local funds to improve educational opportunities for migrant students to enable them to meet the state's challenging content and performance standards. States are required to provide high quality instruction that meets the needs of all students. Federal grant money is further used to ensure that the same high expectations are held of migrant students and of non-migrant students.

Texas receives about $43 million, which is distributed to local education agencies for supplemental services to migrant students.

The U.S. Department of Education has created a network of comprehensive regional assistance centers to deliver technical assistance and training services to state, regional and local education agencies. Among the areas of focus is the education of migrant students. The comprehensive regional assistance center in Texas, the STAR Center, is a collaboration of the Intercultural Development Research Association, the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and RMC Research Corporation in Denver. The STAR Center also works collaboratively with the Education Service Center in Region 1 in Edinburg, Texas, to provide technical assistance in migrant education.

A CHILD SHOULD NOT SUFFER EDUCATIONALLY BECAUSE OF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF HIS OR HER FAMILY.

Through this collaboration, the STAR Center has created a resource guide for high school administrators who design strategies to make a high school education accessible to migrant students. The guide is also designed for counselors who advise migrant students through a myriad of educational requirements that sometimes are in conflict with the migrant lifestyle. This resource guide, *GEMS: Graduation Enhancement for Migrant Students*, addresses several essential areas, including counseling, leadership development, student entry and withdrawal from schools, ESL instruction, personal growth, and recovery programs (see Page 4). The guide was developed with the help of counselors and administrators who have extensive experience in making quality education accessible to migrant students (STAR Center, 1997).

The guide assists schools in re-examining policies that are barriers to educational access for migrant students to allow for alternative ways of meeting graduation requirements. To meet the Texas state standards of the Academic Excellence Indicator System, schools should do the following:

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TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF ACADEMIC SKILLS (TAAS)

Grade 10 Exit Level – Students in Texas Meeting Minimum Expectations (Passing) By Subject Area, Spring 1997

Data Variable	Number Tested	Percent Met Minimum Expectations All Tests Taken	Percent Met Minimum Expectations Reading	Percent Met Minimum Expectations Mathematics
Texas	210,095	67%	86%	72%
Migrant	4,735	44%	67%	54%
African American	26,830	48%	78%	53%
Hispanic	68,160	52%	75%	59%
White	107,472	81%	94%	84%
Low socio-economic status	62,340	50%	74%	57%

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, Spring 1997.

Schools As Communities of Learners: An Initiative Toward Creating Democratic Education

Anita Tijerina Revilla, M.A.

Being bicultural in a society that advocates a "common culture" is not easy. There is an emphasis in the United States toward a common culture that some people believe holds the country together and makes it stronger. While some praise diversity, others contend that the country will be separated by difference.

Likewise, biculturalism often is viewed in schools as a deficit. Thus, educational reform initiatives often attempt to eliminate differences. Antonia Darder states that while many people "in essence, recognize that inequity exists in American society, they seek solutions that will work to prepare (change) the bicultural student so that she or he will be able to compete better in the (unequal) system" (1991).

Unfortunately, for students of minority or poor backgrounds, this is overwhelmingly true. The challenge is to create a democratic environment where the "lived cultures of bicultural [and all] students are critically integrated into the pedagogical process" (Darder, 1991).

This article discusses the challenges of living on the borderlands, the *Effective Border School Research and Development Initiative* conducted by the Texas Education Service Center in Region I, and the need for schools to become *communities* of learners.

For many people who live along the border between the United States and Mexico, there exists a blending of identities that others may not understand. The proximity to a country foreign in language and culture that is highly popularized (often times negatively) creates a historical context that can result in a clash of emotions and perceptions. Many Mexican American and non-Mexican origin people have written of this experience and described it as the existence of "border people," that is, people who are engulfed in two cultures that are co-existent. The dual identity of a person who lives on the border captures the essence of biculturalism.

People in border regions are witnesses to diversity every day of their lives. They partake in the grand cultures of, in this case, the United States and Mexico. In doing so, they also inherit the history of both cultures and the hostility that aligns that history. For some Mexican American children and adults, the border can represent family, culture and belonging. For others, it can signify pain, shame and danger. It is important for educators to recognize that both situations can be true for many Mexican-origin students. The history of the border affects students' perceptions of themselves and the world around them.

Thus, in schools we should find ways to address the negative outcomes of national and class prejudice. National prejudice is a reality in the United States because "Americans" are often encouraged to feel superior to people of other nationalities, especially those of so-called "Third World" countries. U.S. citizenship is considered a privilege, and those without U.S. citizenship are treated as second-class, inferior beings.

Yet, Mexican American families who have been U.S. citizens for generations, often are viewed as newcomers and a lower class of people. This is evident in schools and institutions across the nation.

Dr. José A. Cárdenas, IDRA founder and director emeritus, responds in his book, *My Spanish-Speaking Left Foot*:

> The preservation of a cultural heritage should not be confused with national loyalty nor political allegiance to the mother country...Multilingual and multicultural backgrounds need not be a liability in education. They can be an asset, if these assets are recognized and capitalized on by the individual, the family, the teacher and the school (1997).

There are other educators in south Texas, the "Valley," who recognize these realities. They also recognize that there are many things that schools can do to counter the negative effects of border conflicts.

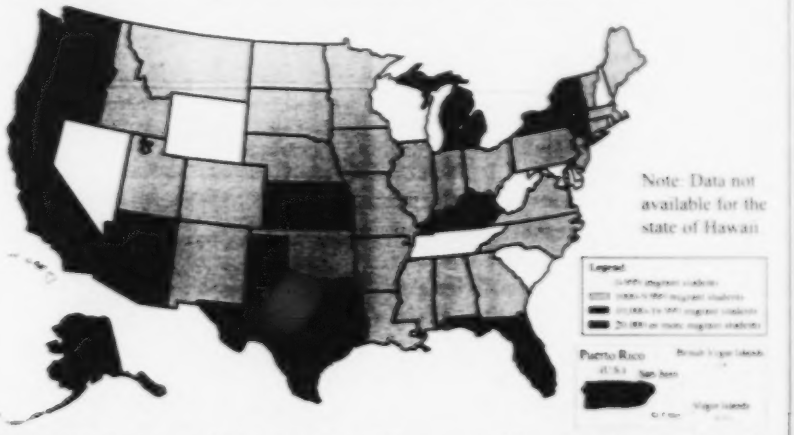
For example, Texas Education Service Center in Region I collaborated with the University of Texas at Austin to develop the *Effective Border School Research and Development Initiative*. This initiative studied schools along the Texas and Mexico border. The purpose was to gather information that would provide educators and administrators with a framework for developing exemplary programs and practices and to help schools improve their overall school programs. The overriding mission of this initiative was to "develop schools along the Texas-U.S. border with Mexico that are among the finest in the world" (Harris and Ovando, 1996).

The research utilized to embark on this project was gathered over a three-year process. The findings led to the formation of six basic concepts that set the framework for

Schools as Communities - continued on page 4

Did You Know?

Migrant students are in schools across the country.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Migrant Education, 1997.

GEMS: Graduation Enhancement for Migrant Students

by the STAR Center and the Texas Education Service Center Region I

The mobile lifestyle of migrant students makes it difficult for them to accrue the required credits to graduate from high school. Migrant students typically bring a particular set of characteristics to their learning experiences. These characteristics require schools to search for creative, flexible and new approaches to best meet their needs. Understanding the migrant lifestyle and being sensitive to inherent problems students face is a responsibility that all public educators must accept. This informative guidebook is a quick reference on a variety of subjects, and it was developed to assist in the delivery of instructional and support services for migratory students.

The *GEMS: Graduation Enhancement for Migrant Students* includes:

- ✔ **Migrant Program Overview**
- ✔ **Counseling and Guidance**
- ✔ **Pathways to Success: Secondary and Beyond**
- ✔ **Graduation Plans**
- ✔ **Credit Options**
- ✔ **Leadership Programs**
- ✔ **Late Entry and Early Withdrawal Alternatives**
- ✔ **Addressing the Language and Academic Needs of Language-Minority Students**
- ✔ **Student Personal Growth**
- ✔ **Recovery Programs**
- ✔ **Educational Resources**

This guide has been distributed to Texas education service centers and was the topic of a statewide video conference. To order or to request information on available training contact the STAR Center at IDRA (5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, Texas 78228-1190; phone 210/684-8180; fax 210/684-5389; e-mail: idra@idra.org). 128 pages; 1997 First Edition; $15.

The STAR Center is the comprehensive regional assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education to serve Texas. It is a collaboration of the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and RMC Research Corporation.

Schools as Communities *- continued from page 3*

searching for and creating effective border schools. These community-of-learners concepts include the following.

- **Vision.** There is a clear, compelling, shared image of what should, must and can be provided to promote learning at the highest levels for students.
- **Leadership and Governance.** Highly creative and imaginative decisions are encouraged. Coordinated efforts from school board to parents, teachers and students exist with optimum level of involvement of all concerned.
- **Responsive Pedagogy.** Creative and imaginative classroom teaching programs and practices effectively utilize relevant curriculum, state-of-the art instructional methods, and materials and assessments that clearly support a positive learning environment that meets the needs of individuals, builds upon the culture and past experiences, and addresses the development and "readiness" stages of students.
- **Family and Community.** Parents, businesses and community agencies are actively involved with school affairs, providing support and special services and networking to assure coordination.
- **Capacity Building.** Ongoing utilization of knowledge bases and unique cultural contexts guide staff development, aggressive program design and appropriate resource allocation.
- **Schooling Practice.** There is concerted, orchestrated use of only the most effective programs and classroom practices supported by research, professional wisdom, and unified campus and district commitments.

Essentially, these six concepts can be utilized by any school in the nation and be proven effective. They work especially well in border regions because they target a holistic approach to school reform and promising practices. The most important aspect of these concepts is that they involve family, community and culture. Without those key elements of involvement and the complementing pedagogical and management practices, schools will not be able to achieve effective schooling or exemplary status. Harris and Ovando state:

> The school can be thought of as a community of students, parents, teachers and others who are all teaching, learning and caring for each other. A community of learners can be fully effective over time only as it maximizes opportunities for all stakeholders to engage in the lifelong process of learning (1996).

The project creators further accentuate that a school is not a "factory." It is a place where children and families go to foster the learning process. It becomes a unique community that encompasses not only students, teachers and school staff, but also embraces parents and community members as key stakeholders of the educational process. As such, children should be encouraged to learn about the history of their people and their community in school. Education can and should integrate the historical and social realities of students and their families in order to create a democratic education in which students lives are valued in the classroom. Harris and Ovando further point out:

> Widespread citizen understanding, support and active involvement in the life of the school community appears essential in the development and persistence of the finest kinds of education for all students (1996).

IDRA is a strong supporter of the collaboration between educators, families and communities. We know that there are strong links between valuing a child's family and personal identity and their success in school. Many children who live along the U.S.-Mexico border deal with controversial social issues that may affect them or their peers in negative ways. It is up to schools and the community as a whole to work together to create better situations for all students.

Resources

Cardenas, J.A. *My Spanish-Speaking Left Foot* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, 1997).

Darder, A. *Culture and Power in the Classroom: A Critical Foundation for Bicultural Education* (Westport, Connecticut: Bergin and Garvey, 1991).

Harris, B. and M. Ovando. *Effective Border Schools Research and Development Initiative* (Texas Education Service Center in Region I, University of Texas at Austin and Texas Education Agency, July 1996).

Anita Tijerina Revilla, M.A., is an education assistant in the IDRA Division of Professional Development. Comments and questions may be sent to her via e-mail at idra@idra.org.

Creative Opportunities - continued from page 2

- Ensure the availability of courses needed for graduation to accommodate late entry and early withdrawal.
- Provide credit consolidation for partial credits and incomplete course work.
- Maintain dropout recovery activities and adult basic education intervention through non-district agencies, such as community colleges and non-profit organizations.
- Support intrastate and interstate coordination with teachers, counselors and registrars.
- Supply adequate opportunities for migrant students to participate in extracurricular activities such as sports, student organizations and leadership conferences.
- Provide TAAS administration out-of-state or elsewhere in Texas for cases of students' early withdrawal from their home districts.
- Allow the completion of course work by correspondence or distance learning, such as through the University of Texas at Austin Migrant Program or Project SMART.

Another barrier to migrant students' access to quality instructional programs occurs when schools fail to integrate migrant students' cultural and experiential richness associated with the mobile lifestyle of a migrant population. Migrant students are often not viewed as valuable resources. However, teachers and schools that integrate students' culture and rich array of experiences into the curriculum find it beneficial to all students. A curriculum that acknowledges all members of a school community serves to create a more complete and realistic educational experience for all students.

Other reasons for low performance among migrant students include the following (McCollum and Garcia, 1996).

- School personnel with no training or preparation to meet the specific needs of migrant students.
- Lack of support for migrant students' smooth transitions from school to school.
- Lack of effective assessment tools for testing migrant students.
- Few programs that develop skills to prepare migrant students for options beyond high school.
- Lack of financial resources and support for schoolwide changes.

A high percent of migrant students are from families whose first language is a language other than English. Oralia Rios, an administrator for the La Joya Independent School District (ISD) in Texas, provides a framework for aligning instruction with the English language proficiency levels of secondary migrant students in the STAR Center's GEMS resource guide. According to Rios, the following teaching strategies have been successful with migrant secondary students (STAR Center, 1997).

- *Discovery Learning*. Students are provided academic materials and learn the content through a discovery approach.
- *Problem-solving*. Students are given a situation, and they learn about the issues

Creative Opportunities - continued on page 6

Second Language Acquisition Strategies and Activities for Foreign-Born Students

Beginning Level	Intermediate Level	Advanced Level
← Cooperative Groups →		
← Concretes, Manipulatives and Visuals →		
• Total physical response • Non-verbal role play • Rhymes, chants, songs, games • Hands-on projects • Read aloud (repetitive, predictable, stories, patterned language) • Choral and echo reading • Pre-recorded stories • Author's chair (pictures) • Flannel board stories • Environmental labels • Word banks • Language experience approach • Cloze activities • Think-pair-share • Silent reading	• Role play (verbal) • Reading, writing, reciting poetry • Group discussions • Retelling stories • Process writing • Dialogue journals • Quick writes • Graphic organizers • Summarizing • Compare and contrast stories and authors	• Easy reading and writing • Evaluating • Predicting outcomes • Supporting • Analyzing charts and graphs
Students are asked to: • Point • Choose • Draw • Act out • Match • Label • Select • Name • Circle • List • State	Students are asked to: • Recall • Compare • Retell • Contrast • Define • Summarize • Describe • Restate	Students are asked to: • Analyze • Evaluate • Create • Justify • Defend • Support • Debate • Explain

Source: STAR Center. *GEMS: Graduation Enhancement for Migrant Students* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, 1997).

Creative Opportunities - continued from page 5

as they solve a problem.

- *Cooperative Learning*: Students work together in small groups to achieve an academic skill or accomplish an academic task collaboratively.
- *Product Generalization*: Students research a topic and produce an outcome as a result of the learning experience.
- *Interactive Learning*: Students participate in the learning process by *doing* rather than *listening* and *seeing*.
- *Hands-on Activities*: Students manipulate objects and materials in the learning process.
- *Graphic Organizers*: Students use charts and graphics to understand text structures and analyze narratives for plot, character, setting, etc.

The table on Page 5 provides an ESL framework that details necessary strategies at three different levels: beginning, intermediate and advanced. At each level, students acquire specific language skills. This framework has been used to assess the degree to which content area instruction is addressing the needs of migrant students.

The GEMS resource guide encourages administrators to implement counseling programs to assist migrant students with the transition from one school to another and to develop the students' personal growth. The guide states, "Personally, students need to feel worthy and successful in what they do with their lives. A good self-esteem is the foundation for success" (STAR Center, 1997).

The nation cannot continue to allow migrant students to be short-changed in schools while President Clinton and educational leaders are calling for higher standards in education for all students. Migrant students have the right to receive an excellent education. Although there are exceptions where some GED graduates have continued their education at the university level, GED programs should not be seen by schools and education agencies as an acceptable alternative to graduating from high school with a diploma.

There are support services and programs that schools can actively pursue to adopt and implement. But first, administrators, teachers and community members must all decide to make education work for all children, including migrant students.

Resources

McCollum, P. and J. Garcia. "Immigrant Education from the Administrator's Perspective." *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, May 1996).

STAR Center. *GEMS: Graduation Enhancement for Migrant Students* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, 1997).

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HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT IDRA ACTIVITIES

In November and December, IDRA worked with **14,610** teachers, administrators and parents through **136** training and technical assistance activities and **141** program sites in **12** states plus the United Kingdom. Topics included:

- Teaching Content: ESL Strategies for Classroom Teachers
- Challenging the Myths of Bilingual Education
- Capitalizing on Cultural Diversity
- Strategies for Developing Emerging Literacy
- Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- Brownsville ISD, Texas
- Los Angeles County, California
- Corpus Christi ISD, Texas
- San Antonio ISD, Texas
- Chicago Public Schools, Illinois
- Cuba Public Schools, New Mexico

Activity Snapshot

More than half of Texas' schools are eligible to be Title I schoolwide campuses. The STAR Center is supporting the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the 20 regional education service centers in organizing and implementing a statewide system of school support teams. The STAR Center is the comprehensive regional assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education to serve Texas by providing support and technical assistance services to the Texas Education Agency, regional service centers and local school districts in the state. The STAR Center has also designed and hosted two schoolwide institutes in collaboration with the education service centers in Region XX and Region XIII. These institutes are developing capacity in school support teams to assess the effectiveness of schoolwide reform efforts and to assist campuses in the implementation and evaluation of school reform efforts aimed at enhancing student achievement. The STAR Center is a collaboration of the Intercultural Development Research Association, the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and RMC Research Corporation.

Regularly, IDRA staff provides services to:

- public school teachers
- parents
- administrators
- other decision makers in public education

Services include:

- training and technical assistance
- evaluation
- serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula

For information on IDRA services for your school district or other group, contact IDRA at 210/684-8180.

REFLECTIONS

LeRoy Johnson

A CALL FROM BEYOND

I didn't know if all boys and girls in school spent their summers and winters like I did. I just knew that it was the way of life for my family and me. During the summer, we would travel to different parts of Texas to work in the fields. My recollections of these times were of the blazing heat beating down on my back, the sweat dripping from my brow, the exhausting repetitive work, and my thoughts that one day I wouldn't have to do this kind of work.

In the winter, the story was pretty much the same – except the weather was usually very cold, not like the 70-degree winters of the Rio Grande Valley. On Thanksgiving day, we always had a nice meal, complete with a stuffed turkey. Following the feast we were off to the fields and back to work. It was a never-ending cycle: the Pecos area and cantaloupe; Bay City, Texas and rice fields; and Raymondville, Texas, and cotton fields.

I didn't know any other lifestyle, so I guess I didn't feel sorry for myself, as some would expect a 10-year-old boy to feel. It was really quite the contrary. I thought it was exciting to be able to travel across Texas and meet new people. When I returned to my home and school in Tabasco Viejo (present-day La Joya) and my history teacher spoke of mountain ranges or the Gulf Coast Indians, I could say, "I've been there!" The other students in my class thought it was neat.

When I grew older and was able to obtain my driver's license, I earned a job as a driver and crew leader. This position held a lot of responsibility for me because I had to make sure that the workers arrived at their job site on time and that quotas were met. My grandmother would say that she was very proud of me because I was responsible enough to keep a job, I handled my position with respect for others, and I had dreams of something more.

She was always looking out for me.

On one blistering, Friday afternoon, she made a telephone call to me that changed my life.

With the humidity at an all-time high, mosquitoes biting at any area of exposed skin they could find, I was working in a rice field in Bay City, Texas, making sure that the freshly picked rice made it onto the bed of my truck without bruises.

The foreman called out my name and instructed me to call home when we returned to town. Immediately, I began to panic, thinking something horrible had happened to my grandparents back home in Tabasco Viejo. That day felt like the longest day of my life.

When the workday was over, I drove to the nearest convenience store and pulled my pickup truck into the parking lot. I was so eager to call home that I jumped out of the truck before shifting the gear to "park." Before I knew it, I was already dialing my grandparent's telephone number from a rotary telephone.

My grandmother answered very cheerfully – totally oblivious of the disastrous thoughts that had been racing through my mind all day. When I told her what I had been thinking, she only laughed and said that she hadn't called with bad news. She had good news to pass along. Freshmen orientation would begin on Monday morning at the local Pan American College. If I packed my bags and left right away, I would make it to the orientation.

I tried to explain that college was expensive and there would always be time to go later, but she would not accept my excuses. So, there I was with my bags packed, driving my 1953 Ford truck with a broken headlight, heading back to the Rio Grande Valley where a new future lay before me.

I went on to become a teacher of migrant and limited-English-proficient students and then – for 23 years – to direct migrant education activities here in the Valley through the Education Service Center in Region I.

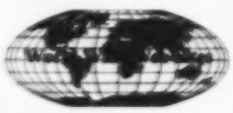
Today – 38 years later – I thank God everyday for my grandmother's telephone call. It enabled me to make a difference in my life and in the lives of migrant families and children across the United States. I have never forgotten what it was like to work in the fields and to struggle to maintain good grades in the classroom. I suppose I made it my mission in life to ensure that others with an upbringing like mine wouldn't have to face the same obstacles.

I know that I can't change the way things are. I do know that – like my grandmother – I will have faith in others, I will not accept excuses, and I will always spread "good news."

LeRoy Jackson, M.A., is the director of migrant education for the Education Service Center in Region I.

EDUCATIONAL WEB SITES: MIGRANT EDUCATION

BEST Migrant Education Resources www.macsky.bigsky.dillon.mt.us/migrant.html
Council of Chief State School Officers: Interstate Migrant Education Council www.ccsso.org/imec.html
ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools aelvira.ael.org/erichp.htm
Intercultural Development Research Association www.idra.org
Migrant Head Start Quality Improvement Center www.mhstasc.org
National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE) www.ncbe.gwu.edu
STAR Center* (Support for Texas Academic Renewal) www.starcenter.org
U.S. Department of Education: Office of Migrant Education www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/MEP
University of Texas at Austin Migrant Student Program www.utexas.edu/dce/eimc/il/migrant/description.html



Compiled by IDRA

*A collaboration of IDRA, the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and RMC Research Corporation.

Migrant Students and the Influence of Teachers

Frank Gonzales, Ph.D.

Last summer, I provided training to a group of teachers of migrant students in Arkansas. One of the teachers, Nina Spencer from Wynn Public Schools, shared a poem that one of her 10th grade students wrote to her on the last day of school:

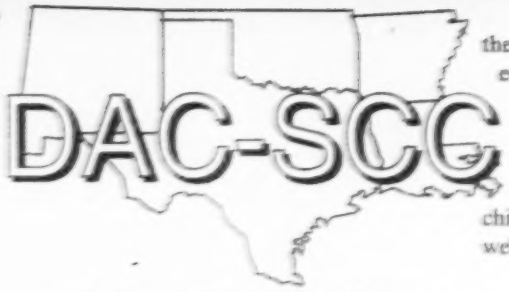
When I moved here
I had no one at all.
But you showed up
and broke my fall.
You believed in me
when no one else would.
When I was down
You told me I could.
Thanks for all the things
You've done.
Thanks to you
I just might have finally won.
Thanks, Mrs. Spencer, for all the help
and motivation I need to get by.

This poem was written by a migrant student, and his poem exemplifies the great impact teachers are having on their students.

The term *migrant children* is associated with children whose parents are migrant agricultural workers and whose families have moved from one school district to another within the preceding 36 months.

The migrant child may be of any ethnicity. Depending on the geographical region, the migrant child may also be classified as an ethnic, racial or language-minority student. Many schools are experiencing increases in numbers of migrant students. In quite a few instances, migrant families are a new population in the community. Schools that have grown accustomed to serving a particular profile of students (usually a less diverse profile) find they must adapt in order to best serve all their students.

In recent years, communities in northwestern Arkansas have experienced



an increase in the number of language-minority, migrant children. The northwest region of the state is an economically thriving area. Until the mid-1990s, few ethnic or linguistically-different people lived in this agricultural community, but the need for cheap labor in the poultry industry attracted recent immigrants from the Marshall Islands, Southeast Asia, Mexico, Central America and the southwest U.S. border states. These workers brought their families and impacted the schools and communities of the once Anglo American majority region in Arkansas.

The dramatic changes led surrounding schools to develop English as a second language (ESL) programs and to hire teachers and instructional aides who could communicate with Spanish-speaking children and who were familiar with the cultural characteristics of the newly arrived families.

During the past four years, many school districts, universities and education service centers in the region participated in extensive training and technical assistance from the IDRA Desegregation Assistance Center – South Central Collaborative for Equity (SCCE). The center collaborated with the U.S. Department of Education's equity unit to assist the school districts in serving migrant children in the first through 12th grades. Also, the Tyson Corporation sponsored two ESL institutes for teachers.

Most people would be satisfied with these important changes and improvements to the school districts in the region. But Diana Worthen decided that something should also be done to support the primary language of students in the community. Ms. Worthen is a high school science teacher and mother of a 3-year-old daughter who speaks both English and Spanish. Three other concerned teachers from Rogers Public Schools, Maria Ramilo, Jared Patton and Al Lopez, agreed with her.

The Northwest Educational Co-op and the Springdale Public Library had an established pre-literacy story time program for 2- to 5-year-old children. The teachers requested that they provide story time and teaching activities for pre-kindergarten language-minority children and their families in Spanish as well.

Research indicates that children who are provided native language support through the fifth grade are more likely to do the following (Thomas and Collier, 1995).

- Graduate from high school.
- Score higher on standardized tests. (Bilingual students use different parts of the brain for cognitive skills.)
- Acquire a second language (English) more effectively and easily. (It is easier for a child to learn a second language if the child has acquired the skills necessary to speak, read and write in his or her native language.)
- Acquire the phonemic system (English sound system) as native speakers of English.

The next challenge was to acquire funding for Spanish-language books and equipment to use in training sessions with parents and volunteers working with pre-kindergarten language-minority children. The teachers submitted a proposal to the Arkansas State Department of Education Title VII coordinator. The state department awarded a grant for $8,000 to the Springdale Public Library to develop a pilot project that could be replicated by other communities.

The grant enabled the library to purchase 500 Spanish language books appropriate for 2- to 5-year-old children, equipment, incentive awards and supplies. It also supported development of a bilingual video and public service announcements for television and Spanish-language radio stations in the area.

The pre-literacy activities focus on the development of literacy skills for language-minority children and their families. The first series of the project began last month. The library is hosting storytelling and pre-literacy teaching activities twice weekly for seven-week periods in the spring, summer and fall of 1998. Parents, community volunteers and volunteer teachers staff the program and conduct the

Migrant Students - continued on page 9

Coming Up!

In March, the *IDRA Newsletter* focuses on math and science.

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1997 Exemplary Migrant Students

Editor's Note: The University of Texas at Austin Migrant Student Program is celebrating the accomplishments of migrant students with a publication that highlights exemplary migrant students. The following is an excerpt from that publication including the profiles of two students.

A new booklet highlights the accomplishments of some special migrant students. Nominated as exemplary by their Texas or receiving school counselors, they have many success stories. Many of these students are near the top of their classes, are members of the National Honor Society, or are enrolled in honors or advanced classes. Many will graduate from high school this spring – some after completing their graduation requirements in only three years – and many plan to go on to college. In addition, these students have found the time to participate in extra-curricular activities and volunteer to help their communities.

These students have achieved their successes despite the hardships caused by their migrations. The 37 students in this booklet attended 15 different Texas schools and migrated to 20 different states. Many students migrated frequently, leaving their Texas schools early and returning late every school year. Some started migrating at a very early age. In addition, some students worked to help their families financially: some held jobs while attending regular school; others attended night school after working all day in the fields.

These students have contributed so much to their schools, their families and their communities. We would like to give something back through this booklet, which recognizes their achievements. As these students continue to strive to reach their goals, we hope this booklet will bring back memories of where they have been and how much they have already accomplished.

Francelia Martinez, 1997 Exemplary Migrant Student of the Year

(Memorial High School, McAllen, Texas)

Although she is not the first in her family to graduate from high school, Francelia will be the first to enroll in a university. Francelia has migrated annually to Hillsboro, North Dakota, and Warden, Washington, since she was three years old. She has never completed a school year without interruption.

"As a migrant student, I always entered late due to our work, which extended into the fall..." she says. "I've been migrating almost all my life. Every year something new happens. If it is not having to sleep in your car because of not being able to find a house, it is praying to God for the rain to stop."

Despite her very late enrollments and early withdrawals, Francelia has maintained an 86 GPA in college preparation classes. In the University of Texas program, she completed correspondence courses in U.S. government and economics, one on-site-grading course in informal geometry, and three Spanish examinations for credit. These courses enabled her to meet her graduation requirements on time and allowed her to work as an assistant to the migrant clerk.

She comments, "It is never too late to educate ourselves; an education for me is the vehicle that will transport me from the fields of poverty to the successful career of my dreams."

In addition to her busy academic schedule and her job, Francelia found the time to be a member of Business Professionals of America, president of the Migrant Club, and vice president of the youth club of San Luis Gonzaga Church. When she resided in North Dakota, she worked as a volunteer reader for pre-schoolers. Francelia has applied for admission to the University of Texas – Pan American in Edinburg and to St. Edward's University in Austin.

Basthi Hernandez

(Tom C. Clark High School, San Antonio, Texas)

Raised in a family of six, Basthi moved from Mexico when she was four years old. She went to Kindred Elementary School and Dwight Middle School in San Antonio. Every summer, she migrates with her family to Marline Farm, Texas.

Basthi has received attendance awards and is on the honor roll. She is also listed in the *United States Achievement Academy, 1995 National Awards, Volume 109*. She completed all of her lessons in a University of Texas at Austin Individual and Family Life correspondence course and will soon take her final exam.

In the eighth grade, Basthi was in the Junior Honor Society. She was also an eighth-grade cheerleader and has participated in basketball and track. In addition, she tutored elementary and pre-kindergarten students as a participant of the IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program.

Adapted from 1997 Exemplary Migrant Students *with permission from The University of Texas at Austin Migrant Student Program.*

Migrant Students *- continued from page 8*

sessions.

The early childhood reading specialist from the Northwest Arkansas Educational Co-op and the children's literature specialist at the library provide training sessions to volunteers in storytelling, pre-writing activities and utilizing the library. The library staff members will also document the process and activities, evaluate the project and submit a report to the Arkansas State Department of Education.

In the 1990s, many people have called for more collaboration. This example from northwest Arkansas demonstrates how concerned citizens can join together to improve education. More than 30 teachers and community members have agreed to participate in the storytelling sessions and literacy activities.

As an educator, I predict that this effort will be successful among language-minority children and parents. The project validates their language and culture, and it welcomes them into the world of the community library.

Teachers rarely discover the impact. They rarely receive personal poems from former students. But by collaborating with others in the community, they become better partners with families and students. The impact they have on each other shines through.

Resources

Thomas, W.P. and V.P. Collier. *Language-Minority Student Achievement and Program Effectiveness* (Manuscript in preparation, 1995).

Frank Gonzales, Ph.D., is a senior education associate in the IDRA Division of Professional Development. Comments and question may be sent to him via e-mail at idra@idra.org.

Texas School Finance Reform: An IDRA Perspective

by José A. Cárdenas, Ed.D.

Dr. José A. Cárdenas (right) presents a copy of his book to Demetrio Rodriguez (left), lead litigant in the Rodriguez vs. San Antonio ISD case. Photo credit: Randall Reines Photographs, San Antonio, 1997.

A master story-teller, Dr. José A. Cárdenas offers an insider's view of the 28-year history of school finance in Texas. Dr. Cárdenas is the founder and director emeritus of IDRA and is the only person who has been actively involved in the entire school finance reform effort since the early days of the *Rodriguez vs. San Antonio ISD* litigation when he was superintendent of the Edgewood Independent School District. More than a history, this book provides a blueprint for persons interested in bringing about future reform in schools and other social institutions. Beginning with a description of the Texas system in 1950, the account covers court cases, legislation, and advocacy efforts and concludes with the status and future of school finance reform. Personal vignettes sprinkled throughout offer glimpses of those special untold moments that impacted history. Much of this volume – including the myths of school finance and lessons learned – relate to reform efforts in other states as well. Dr. James A. Kelly, president of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, provides a foreword, "Fighting the Good Fight," describing Dr. Cárdenas as a trailblazer and pioneer. As a former program officer for the Ford Foundation, Dr. Kelly coordinated support for school finance reform efforts around the country.

> *"He worked hard, he played hard. And in doing so, never lost sight of his goal. Because for José school finance reform was never really an end in itself. It remained (and remains) a means to a larger end: to improve teaching and learning for all children; in particular, to improve the life chances of the poor and dispossessed ... This book is a testimony to a life lived in pursuit of that dream, one which paid off for all of Texas' children."*
>
> – Dr. James A. Kelly

Officially released on April 29, 1997 – the 10th anniversary of the Edgewood decision by State Superior Judge of Travis County Harley Clark that struck down Texas' school finance system as unconstitutional.

(ISBN 1-878550-63-2; 1997; 387 pages; hardback; $30)

Distributed exclusively by the Intercultural Development Research Association: 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, Texas 78228; Phone 210/684-8180; Fax 210/684-5389; e-mail: idra@idra.org. It is IDRA policy that all orders totalling less than $30 be pre-paid.

All Pianos Have Keys and Other Stories

by Dr. José A. Cárdenas

In a way, this small, 134-page book complements Dr. José Cárdenas' larger *Multicultural Education: A Generation of Advocacy* published by Simon and Schuster. The multicultural education book is an anthology of 92 professional articles resulting from his 45 years as a professional educator. *All Pianos Have Keys* represents the lighter side of these 45 years.

"The seriousness of my professional life has been paralleled by extensive humor in my personal life. I enjoy a funny story and a good joke," writes Cárdenas in the preface.

The first eight articles deal with the lighter side of his life. They include personal anecdotes from childhood to adulthood. The second section consists of 12 anecdotes where humor and professional seriousness have intersected. The last section consists of nine articles on a variety of professional topics addressed in a lighter context than is possible in professional publications.

(ISBN 1-878550-53-5; 1994; 134 pages; paperback; $12.70)

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My Spanish-Speaking Left Foot

by José A. Cárdenas, Ed.D.

José A. Cárdenas (right) and his sister María de Jesús (left), in Charro and China Poblana costumes. Circa 1938.

It was inevitable that José Angel Cárdenas would spend most of his professional life working in the development of multicultural and bilingual programs. He was born in Laredo, Texas, in 1930 with an extensive number of relatives on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. In his fourth book, Dr. Cárdenas combines laughter and insight as he re-lives his encounters growing up in a multicultural environment. He depicts the cultural influence of Mexico and the Spanish-speaking world on a Mexican American living in the United States.

> *"I remember sometimes saying that I was born with my right foot in the United States and my left foot in Mexico. I specifically designate my left foot as the Spanish-speaking one because I was taught in the U.S. Army that the left foot always comes first, and Spanish was my first language."* – *José A. Cárdenas*

In addition to illustrating his childhood capers and his travels throughout Central and South America, Dr. Cárdenas provides compelling reflections of multicultural topics such as wealth, class, language, religion, education and family. Dr. Cárdenas served more than 47 years as a professional educator and is the founder and director emeritus of the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA). IDRA is based in San Antonio and works with schools across the country and internationally to improve education for all children.

(ISBN 1-878550-59-4; 1997; 136 pages; paperback; $9)

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Multicultural Education: A Generation of Advocacy

by Dr. José a. Cárdenas

This compilation includes 92 articles on multicultural education published during a 25-year period. Dr. José A. Cárdenas is the founder of IDRA, was its executive director for 20 years and now serves as director emeritus of the organization. The book provides a historical overview of the author's involvement in the most significant issues in multicultural education as a teacher, administrator and an active advocate for children. It is being distributed by Allyn & Bacon as a reference textbook on this subject.

The dates of the various articles included in the textbook range from 1970 to 1992, though some of the material dates back to the middle 1960s. Articles are organized into 10 chapters dealing with each of 10 major issues in multicultural education. Each chapter is accompanied by a bibliography and appropriate discussion questions. The book also contains five cumulative indices of authors, court cases, legislation, organizations and topics.

Multicultural Education is a reading imperative for teachers, administrators, teacher trainers and policy formulators interested in providing equal educational opportunity to all segments of the school population.

Topics Included:

- minority education
- bilingual education
- education of undocumented children
- school dropouts
- retentions in grade
- early childhood education
- science, math and technology
- standardized testing
- school reform
- a new educational paradigm

(ISBN 0-536-58760-4; 1995; 134 pages; hardback; $38)

Distributed by Allyn & Bacon and by the Intercultural Development Research Association: 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, Texas 78228. Phone 210/684-8180; Fax 210/684-5389; e-mail: idra@idra.org. *It is IDRA policy that all orders totalling less than $30 be pre-paid.*

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Visit IDRA's web site: www.idra.org!

Sample Concurrent Session Topics

The Key to Classroom Organization
Learning Centers: Time Management
Learning Centers: Logistics
Bilingual Issues: Time and Treatment

The Key to Oral Language Development
Nursery Rhymes
Poem and Song
Rhythm Dance
Phonemic Awareness

The Key to Assessment
Appropriate Assessment
Alternative Assessment
Language Assessment

The Key to Play
Talking about Play: Play and Oral Language Development
Play and Thinking: A Mind for Play
Play and Social Development: That's What Friends are For

The Key to Parental Involvement
Parents as Advocates for Children's Success
Parent Leadership Skills
Family Rights

The Key to Core Curriculum
One, Two, Three it's Math for Me
Science: The Wonder of it All
Social Science: My Heritage, My Culture and Myself

For more information or a registration brochure contact Hilaria Bauer or Carol Chavez at IDRA, 210/684-8180; e-mail: idra@idra.org.

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